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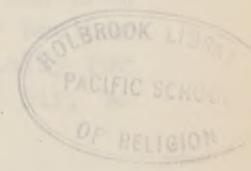
the WORLD ALLIANCE for INTERNATIONAL FRIENDSHIP THROUGH THE CHURCHES

the WORLD ALLIANCE of YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATIONS

the WORLD'S YOUNG WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION

the WORLD'S STUDENT CHRISTIAN FEDERATION

the WORLD COUNCIL OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION



The aim of the Ecumenical Press Service is to keep its readers informed of trends of thought and opinion in and about the Churches and Christian movements. It is therefore not to be held responsible for opinions expressed in its news items.

No. 42

Fifteenth Year

October 22, 1948

Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms

Pressing for a binding international agreement on human rights and fundamental freedoms, Dr O. Frederick Nolde, director of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, has recently brought to the attention of the United Nations General Assembly in Paris the endorsement of such an international agreement by the First Assembly of the World Council of Churches at Amsterdam.

In a letter addressed to all members of the General Assembly's Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee (III) Dr Nolde declared that "if the General Assembly sees fit to adopt a Declaration of Human Rights at its present session, it should formally commit the United Nations to the completion of a Covenant (binding agreement), to be submitted to the member states for their ratification."

Dr Nolde submitted a resolution adopted by the World Council Assembly which described the Declaration now drafted (see E.P.S. No. 24/25) as "neither binding nor enforceable" and urged that covenants and measures of enforcement "be carried to completion as rapidly as possible".

"Reactions recently received from church leaders and agencies in 37 countries reveal the considered opinion that the present draft Declaration (now before the Assembly) represents a minimum of the practices that have been tested in experience and found essential to the observance of religious freedom", Dr Nolde wrote. He urged, on behalf of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, that the religious liberty provisions of the draft Declaration be sustained, and that, if changed, "no essential element is explicitly or implicitly denied."

E.P.S. Geneva

Concerning Bishop Ordass' Sentence

As was reported in the press, Bishop L. Ordass, head of the Lutheran Church of Hungary, was sentenced by the Hungarian Government to two years imprisonment on the charge of currency fraud. This incited the Lutheran Norwegian National Council to write a letter to Lajos Dinnyes, Prime Minister of Hungary. The letter was signed on behalf of the Council by Bishop Berggrav of Oslo, and Olaf Moe, Chairman of the National Lutheran Council. It reads as follows:

"The Norwegian National Council of the Lutheran World Federation has from its headquarters in Geneva received news concerning the situation of our brother-Church in Hungary, which are alarming for any Christian and quite especially for Norwegian church members. We find it our duty to appeal frankly to you, Sir, to consider our experiences and some remarkable facts.

"Our experience is this.

"Six years ago a totalitarian regime in Norway wanted to get rid of a Lutheran bishop, who opposed nazism. This government intended to violate the whole Church, but did not venture to make a frontal attack on freedom of conscience and faith. Instead of that they made use of what they considered a most cunning method. They simply fabricated a lie of their own and in public accused the bishop of unmoral behaviour. Having the propaganda in their power, they only could prevent truth from being heard. The astonished public read the most striking and convincing news about the unmoral bishop. The government got the bishop in their police power, and hoped to succeed in their policy! But falseness never prospers. Truth prevails over propaganda in the long run. We know this in Norway.

"Now you, Sir, have a Lutheran bishop, L. Ordass, who in a true Christian way opposes what the Church on eternal foundations brands as a misuse of democratic state power. You want to force him to abdication, and when he refuses, you accuse him of foreign currency manipulations and put him into prison. Since you have wanted by your telegram to the Lutheran Federation to make us believe this, it becomes our duty to answer you that we on a solid basis of clear facts feel obliged to consider your procedure as a violation of truth as well as of democratic Christian principles of government.

"We are challenged to this statement of conviction also because of your Minister Mihalyfi's speech (officially reported in your newspapers), where he argues against Bishop Ordass, by naming the above mentioned Norwegian bishop. Your minister says that Bishop Berggrav took the opposite line of Bishop Ordass, in opposing nazism and its reactionary plans, whereas Ordass on the contrary opposes 'freedom and democracy'. These words now being quoted in the world press, force us to the statement that Ordass was on quite the same line as the Norwegian bishop against nazism, and that the Norwegian bishop today is of the same conviction as Ordass, namely that misuse of police power, even if it be in the cunning disguise of 'strong morals' is vertically contrary to God's will and therefore is bound to be opposed by all means by a Christian Church." E.P.S.Geneva

RUMANIA

The Fate of the Uniate Church

Patriarch Justinian, head of the Orthodox Church of Rumania, announced that Uniate Christians (Roman Catholic Church of the Byzantine rite) have severed their ties with Rome and joined the Rumanian Orthodox Church.

Thirty-six priests and two archpriests of the Uniate Church, representing 423 priests of their rite, had met at Cluj on October 1, and voted unanimously to submit a petition for reunion with the Orthodox Church. Simultaneously, the conference issued an appeal to Uniate believers to accept their decision.



A Uniate delegation was sent to Bucharest to submit the conference's decision to the Orthodox Patriarchate. The delegates were received at a session of the Orthodox Synod and later participated at a special celebration of the Orthodox liturgy, which was broadcast throughout the nation.

The Uniates of Rumania, numbering about 1,250,000, were united with Rome in 1697 when an Act of Unity was signed at Blaj, Transylvania. The Uniate Church is said to have 1,725 churches and more than 700 priests, headed by a metropolitan and four bishops.

Reunion of the Uniate Church with the Orthodox Church has been anticipated ever since Patriarch Justinian, at his enthronement last May, had urged Uniates to return to Orthodoxy. Many newspapers published articles recalling the return of the Uniates in Russia to the Russian Orthodox Church in 1946 (see E.P.S. No. 29, 1946) and asking, "Will our people have the same joy?"

Many Uniates are said to be opposed to the reunion with Orthodoxy.

E.P.S. Geneva

UNITED STATES

Stanley Jones' Crusade for Church Union

Dr E. Stanley Jones, who has launched a nation-wide campaign for promoting a federal church union (see E.P.S. No.42, 1947), reports that he met such an encouraging response on his second crusade during September that a national convention will be held next autumn, which would be preliminary to calling a constitutional convention to effect an organisation.

Summarising the results of his second crusade, Dr Jones said: "The response this year was far greater than last year. People are beginning to see that you can have union now under the federal union plan. Where they understand the plan, they have responded almost 100 per cent... This includes ministers. In Chicago 485 out of 500 ministers representing a cross section of the life of the city and its environs voted in favour of the plan." E.P.S. Geneva

JAPAN

The Japanese Student Christian Movement

From a report sent to E.P.S. from Dr Winburn Thomas, Reconstruction Secretary for the World's Student Christian Federation in the Far East, we quote the following.

The Japanese Student Christian Movement held its first joint national men and women's conference at Tozanso this summer. Ninety men and women, representing the student Y.M.C.A.s and Y.W.C.A.s spent two days together at the base of Mt Fuji, discovering ways in which they might cooperate in the task of evangelising Japanese universities.

The major value of the conference was that the YMCA and YWCA became self-conscious student movements, aware of their campus responsibilities which went beyond that of giving spiritual nurture to members.

This awareness became articulate especially through the discussions of Communism's challenge. The students were rather well divided between those on

the one hand who felt that because Communism and Christianity are in opposition, Christians should have no relations with Communism, but rather, even at the expense of social failure, should witness with all their power to the Christian faith; and on the other hand, those who feared lest the Christians' absorption in Bible study and prayer would prevent their being properly aware of the social injustice and world ills upon which Communism's existence is a judgment. There was agreement at the conclusion of the discussion that the SCM should be positive rather than negative; that it should preach the whole Gospel, demonstrating with humility that merely to respond to the Communist (or Nihilistic for that matter) challenge by opposing it, was not adequate. It was necessary to formulate a concrete Christian programme, sufficiently related to the evils of the world to attract that large body of students who regard Communism as the only dynamic programme of social reform which gives promise of correcting the very evils Christianity denounces.

The post-war growth of the SCM in Japan is a case of "missions without missionaries". There are no local secretaries, and but one student secretary for each of the national committees of the YMCA and the YWCA. Relying entirely upon volunteer and student initiative a total of 160 students YMCAs and 22 YWCAs have been formed during the past two years.

E.P.S.Geneva

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Relations of Church and State

A new law has been proposed, and is at present under discussion, in Czechoslovakia, concerning the reorganisation of relations between Church and State. The proposal is that the State should offer to all the Churches, and also to the Association of Atheists, to undertake responsibility for covering all administrative expenses incurred and all stipends to pastors. The proposal requires, at the same time, that the consent of the State be obtained prior to all nominations of members of the clergy. The results of the discussions between representatives of the Churches on the one hand and of the State on the other have not yet been announced. The Protestant weekly "Kostnické Jiskry" published in one of its recent numbers a resolution passed unanimously by an Extraordinary Assembly of the representatives of the Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren for the district of Prague, from which we give the following extracts:

"The Church must guard its freedom and its independence, not only in spiritual but in administrative and material matters. The Church is bound to serve the Gospel freely, on its own foundation and through its own power. We wish the Church to abide by its spiritual and educational mission, even if deprived of State support. We are grateful for the support accorded up to now to the Church by the State. We ask that the system of endowments (under which the State has to day helped to cover in part the expenses of the Church) be continued for a transitional period; that the Church should not be required to submit candidates for the pastorate to the previous consent of the State authorities; and that even in future it should collect voluntary contributions from its members and dispose of them as it sees fit. If this request by the Church is unfavourably received, we consider that the only thing for our Church to do is to resolve, humbly, and trusting in God's help, to refuse, in such a situation, all assistance offered by the State. The Regional Assembly of Prague demands that this resolution be submitted to the General Assembly of the Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren, and taken into consideration when the said proposal is under discussion."

E.P.S.Geneva

CZECHOSLOVAKIAConference of Laymen and Theologians

Within the Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren, the "Evangelické Dilo" (Protestant Work) represents a serious attempt to arouse the interest of the laity in the work of the Church and in Christian witness in all fields of life. "Evangelické Dilo" organised a conference on October 2-3 of this year in the town of Caslav, in Bohemia, taking as its theme "The Free Church in the Free State". Among the lecturers was Professor J.L. Hromadka, whose subject was "The Present Problems of the Church". In the course of his talk, Professor Hromadka stated:

"The Church of the Reformation wishes to serve God alone, and hopes for salvation through Jesus Christ alone. The chief question for a Protestant Christian is not that of accomodating himself to the events of the moment, but: 'Are we really the Church of Christ?' The Church of Christ belongs to no era, and cannot be identified with anything in this world. Today we are involved in a radical change in the very structure of society. Rougher classes are taking over the direction of society, and the difficulty for us Protestants is that these people have always lived on the fringe of the national life, and have never been schooled by religion and by the Church. The middle classes, whose faith was never conspicuous for its vigour, have none the less received a certain religious culture; Socialists have no such tradition. From the human point of view, the present situation is much more painful for the Church. All outside support has been withdrawn. And yet, from the point of view of the Church of Christ, we are on the threshold of a finer and more blessed age. In future, we shall not be able to depend upon anything at all - neither upon wealth, nor upon the homage paid us by society, nor upon any human aid, but solely upon the grace and love of God.

"Often we are undecided: on what occasions should we speak out in protest? We must always protest, for there are always injustices. People are brutally bereft of their posts - every revolutionary age brings mud to the surface, the people who wish to settle their own accounts. This does not mean that we should protest against social, economic and political changes. We must prepare for the moment when we must cry aloud: Touch not that which is for us the supreme authority! We are all subject to the authority of truth, justice and the judgment of God. People have the intelligence to realise whether we speak to them in the name of the living God or from economic or political self-interest masquerading as religion.

"Finally, we must remember that the economic and social changes are no solution to the ultimate questions of man. Even in a classless society, the problem of man's relation to man will remain unchanged. There will be lying, unfaithfulness, envy, pride. Who will be able to fight against these? Socialists follow their illusions and will not take these circumstances into account. The time will come when they themselves will begin to seek for people who know how to free man from the final bonds enslaving him in inhumanity. And it is then that the Christian message on sin and the need for forgiveness will once more take on its supreme importance."

E.P.S. Geneva

U.S.S.R.Message to Christians all over the World

On the occasion of the five hundredth anniversary of the independence of the Russian Orthodox Church in Moscow (see E.P.S. No. 31), the representatives of the independent Orthodox Churches sent a Message to Christians all over the world.

This Message, which was drawn up by the Exarch of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church (who has now retired), Metropolitan Stephan of Sofia (see E.P.S. No. 41) is published in full in a special number of the "Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate".

"The leaders and representatives of the autocephalous Orthodox Churches all assembled in historic Moscow, the wonderful capital of the Soviet Union, to celebrate the five hundredth anniversary of the independence of the Russian Orthodox Church, under the auspices of the glorious Patriarch of Russia. This gave the opportunity for informal discussion of the questions which today confront Orthodoxy as a whole.

"Everyone realises that the world today is passing through a stormy period of open and irreconcilable conflict between the West, with its Catholic and rational-Protestant outlook, and the Orthodox East. While the Orthodox East is inspired by the strong motives of peace on earth and goodwill among men, the capitalistic and imperialistic Western world - with its aggressive attitude - is obviously again creating the danger of a new war with its inconceivable terrors for suffering humanity. The leaders of the independent Orthodox Churches are horrified by this aggressiveness and at the same time filled with the intense desire to express the true spirit of Christ. Therefore they feel it to be their sacred duty to address a Message to Christians all over the world, to all men who hunger and thirst after truth and peace, with the appeal to listen to our appeal for brotherly love, humanity, justice and truth.

"In the celebrations which commemorate five hundred years during which the Russian Orthodox Church has served God and men freely, from the mighty Patriarchate of Moscow with its hidden treasures we stretch out our hands to all who want men to treat one another as brothers, and not as wild beast. We propose to them that we should intervene and join together in depriving of their power those who serve the powers of darkness, and whose Christian love and spirit of reconciliation have lost their meaning. It makes a dismal impression on us, members of the Orthodox Church, that the instigators of a new war are children of the Christian world, Catholic and Protestant. It pains us deeply that, instead of hearing the voice of peace and Christian mercy from the Vatican (the bulwark of Catholicism) and from America (the nest of Protestantism), we hear hymns consecrating a new war, the atom bomb and similar achievements for the destruction of human life.

"It is our sincere hope and prayer that the Vatican's pride and lust for power, as well as of those who support the Vatican, and the presumption of Protestant rationalism, may be superseded by the spirit of Christian reconciliation, so that they may all say with the Apostle Paul: 'By the grace of God I am what I am'.

"How beneficial it would be for the whole human race if the Papacy, instead of sending thunder and lightning against those who do not belong to the Roman Church, would return to its Father's house like the weeping Prodigal Son, realising that the spirit of Christian faith and of the true Church of Christ condemns the struggle for power and the strife to be the first; realising also that true Christianity speaks through the spirit of gentleness, obedience and self-sacrifice. Secure in the deep apostolic mystery, we look up with great confidence to the unchanging Lord and Shepherd of the Holy Church, founded by His own blood; and we

pray Him earnestly to send His angels into the Roman Catholic world, to open their eyes to the Christian commandment, 'Love one another'.

"May modern Rome repent and be reconciled with the Rome of the first Apostles Peter and Paul - that Rome upon which the incense of faith, love and peace ascends from the Catacombs - so that all may begin a new life in the spirit of Christ: 'He who would be first among you, let him be your servant'.

"Children of Christ, children of the Holy Church in all continents and nations, Christians all over the world! Do not let us be blind nor deaf to the smouldering hatred of another war. No one will deny that the imperialists large and small, the terrorists, dictators and despisers of men are doing the devil's work by instigating another insane orgy of human destruction, which will mean the end of civilisation and deprive life of all significance.

"But we who stand united in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of the earth, will build a wall against all attempts to destroy peace; through our unity and our piety we shall destroy any attempts to start another war in a world which is not yet purified after the blood, tears, sorrow and death of the last one.

"In the great, self-sacrificing venture of the Russian Orthodox autocephalous Church, the Holy Orthodox Ecumenical Church sees the firmest foundation for the maintenance of peace, by reason of its fervent prayers and self-sacrificing love. We therefore appeal to all who call themselves Christians and who realise the true destiny of man, to unite in opposing everything that stands in the way of our Christian calling and our Christian service, and which endeavours to make us the tools of the powers of darkness.

"Bearing in mind the words of the Apostle Paul: 'Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God', we believe that all right-thinking people far and near will hear our call to unity in the spirit of peace, love and truth, so that the world may be filled with the light of Christian truth to the glory of the One Eternal God and for the blessing of His most dearly-loved creature - man." E.P.S.Geneva

U.S.S.R.

Death of Archbishop Photius

We have just heard of the death of Archbishop Photius. In July he went to Paris to replace Metropolitan Seraphim, Exarch of the Patriarchate of Moscow in France, who had gone to Moscow to take part in the 500th anniversary of the independence of the Orthodox Russian Church and the Congress of Orthodox Churches (see E.P.S. No. 31). After staying a few weeks in Paris, Archbishop Photius returned to Moscow before the return of Metropolitan Seraphim to Paris. We do not know whether he was able to go back to his diocese in Odessa. He was one of the Russian clergy sent to Paris to negotiate with representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church in Emigration about its affiliation to the Moscow Patriarchate.

E.P.S.Geneva

Follow-up of the Amsterdam Assembly

Meetings are now being organised in every country, to give church members an insight into the work done by the Assembly of the World Council of Churches at Amsterdam.

A very large audience met in the Temple de l'Oratoire, Paris, on October 7, presided over by Pastor Marc Boegner, one of the Presidents of the World Council. Accounts of the Assembly were given by two people who had been alternates at Amsterdam and everyone used the same word, "miracle", to describe this union of friends, this family atmosphere among the members from all over the world. Everyone recognised the Assembly as a great hope for the future.

On October 1, two meetings were held in Dublin to bring to the Churches the message of Amsterdam. The Archbishop of Dublin took the chair at both. In the afternoon, Bishop Neill spoke to clergy and ministers about the follow-up of Amsterdam, and the tasks that the Assembly desires to lay on the Churches. For the evening meeting, the hall was packed out, many people having to stand, and others to sit on the edge of the platform. There was evidently a spirit of real interest and enthusiasm, making it clear that the Churches in Ireland are awake to the significance of the ecumenical movement. The meeting was addressed by the Rev. Dr J.A.H. Irwin (Presbyterian Church of Ireland), and Bishop Neill, both of whom spoke of their own experiences at the Assembly, and tried to bring to their hearers something of the spirit and the achievements of the Amsterdam meeting. Plans have been made to hold similar meetings at many other places in Ireland in the course of the next few months.

On Sunday, October 23, the French Protestant Federation is organising a meeting at Strasbourg, where Dr Visser 't Hooft is to speak.

Finally in Geneva on November 4, a meeting will be held in the Salle de la Réformation, at which Dr Visser 't Hooft will give an address. The Assembly film will be shown for the first time, together with gramophone recordings of some of the speeches made at Amsterdam.

E.P.S.Geneva

GERMANY

The Congregation as the Kernel of Church Life

The Synod of the Province of Berlin-Brandenburg has passed a fundamentally new order for the churches in its province. It starts with the congregation as the kernel of church life and aims at preventing the organs of the Church from being completely submerged by secular elements, as they were at the time of National Socialism. On the other hand it wants to guard against the isolation of the congregations and a closer link between the elders and the church members.

According to the new church order, the ecclesiastical councils will assume the task of forming an inner circle in the Church, which has the right to make proposals for the appointment of elders, whereas the elders are actually elected by all the adult church members who have been admitted to Holy Communion. In addition to the ecclesiastical council, the new church order provides for an ecclesiastical advisory committee which includes all the officers of the Church, and keeps the elders in closer touch with the congregation.

The lay element is strengthened by the fact that responsible men and women who have not studied theology may be allowed to preach.

The new order also gives the legal basis for the office of bishop, which had hitherto been a temporary one.

E.P.S.Geneva

